

MINNESOTA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED UPGRADE OF GREAT RIVER ENERGY'S SAINT BONIFACIUS PEAKING STATION CARVER COUNTY, MINNESOTA

EQB Docket No. 02-34-PPS-GRE

**Watertown Town Hall
Thursday, June 6, 2002
7:00 pm**

The Minnesota Environmental Quality Board will conduct a public hearing on Thursday, June 6, 2002, on a proposal by Great River Energy (GRE) to upgrade its St. Bonifacius peaking station. The hearing will commence at 7:00 pm and will be held in the Watertown Town Hall in Carver County, Minnesota. Administrative Law Judge Steve M. Mihalchick will preside at the hearing.

Description of Project. Great River Energy (GRE) has submitted an application to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (MEQB) for a site permit to upgrade its St. Bonifacius peaking station in Watertown Township, Carver County, Minnesota. GRE proposes to install an inlet air-cooling system that will allow the unit to operate more efficiently and at a higher capacity. The upgrade would expand the maximum generating output of the plant from 49 megawatts (MW) to approximately 74 MW. The project involves the installation of pumps, motors, a water filtration system, injection nozzles, and related equipment.

The application for the permit was submitted on February 28, 2002, and accepted by the EQB Chair on March 8, 2002. On April 8, 2002, a public meeting was held by the MEQB staff at the Watertown Township hall to discuss the project with interested persons and to solicit input into the scope of an Environmental Assessment to be prepared on the project. The Environmental Assessment was completed by MEQB staff on May 22, 2002.

Statutory Authority. A site permit from the EQB is required under the Power Plant Siting Act for a large electric power generating plant over 50 megawatts. Minnesota Statutes section 116C.57, subdivision 1. The EQB is presently in the process of amending its Power Plant Siting Rules(found in Minnesota Rules chapter 4400) for the processing of permit applications for large electric power generating plants. The EQB adopted interim guidance in October 2001 to apply to proceedings like this one.

EQB Project Manager. Bill Storm of the EQB Power Plant Siting staff is the project manager. Mr. Storm's address is Minnesota Environmental Quality Board, 300 Centennial Bldg., 658 Cedar St., St. Paul, MN 55155, tel: 651-296-9535, fax: 651-296-3698, e-mail bill.storm@mnplan.state.mn.us. Mr. Storm will be present at the hearing and will make a brief presentation.

Public Advisor. The public advisor for this project is Larry Hartman of the EQB Power Plant Siting staff. Mr. Hartman's address is the same as listed above, and his phone number is (612) 296-5089 e-mail: Larry.Hartman@state.mn.us. Mr. Hartman can be contacted with questions about the procedure being followed in this matter.

Presiding Officer. Administrative Law Judge Steve M. Mihalchick will conduct the hearing. Judge Mihalchick's address is Office of Administrative Hearings, 100 Washington Square, Suite 1700, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55401-2138. The phone number is (612) 341-7600.

Hearing Procedure. This proceeding is being conducted under the alternative review procedures of Minnesota Statutes section 116C.575, which establishes a shorter, less formal process for power plants fueled by natural gas than for power plants burning other fuels. The public hearing required under the alternative process is not a full-blown contested case hearing like the ones conducted under chapter 1405 of the rules of the Office of Administrative Hearings. The applicable procedures are found in parts 4400.2000 to 4400.2900 of the interim guidance. By way of example, the procedures to be followed here do not require formal intervention by parties, or a prehearing conference, or prefiling of written testimony.

The purpose of the public hearing is to compile the record for the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board to consider in making a final decision on the permit request. The EQB staff will attend the hearing and make a brief presentation about the project and introduce into the record a number of documents relating to the project, including the application, the Environmental Assessment, and certain procedural documents. Representatives of the applicant (Great River Energy) will be present to offer evidence and to answer questions. Members of the public will have an opportunity to ask questions of EQB staff and GRE representatives, to make statements, and to offer written comments and material into the record. The record will remain open for at least ten days after the close of the hearing for interested persons to submit written comments to the Administrative Law Judge. The Judge will determine at the hearing a date for the comment period to end. Upon closure of the public comment period, the Administrative Law Judge will compile the record and transmit it to the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board but will not make findings or a recommendation. The EQB will make a final decision on the permit at a subsequent Board meeting.

Project Information. Additional information on this project, including the application and the environmental assessment and the interim guidance, is available on the EQB's web page at: www.mnplan.state.mn.us/eqb/EnergyFacilities/index.html

Dated: _____

Gene Hugoson
Chair
Environmental Quality Board